MARCH, 1967 VOL. IV, NO. 3

PERSUASION®

VIEWS

THE DRAFT PART VI:
PRIVILEGES AND OBLIGATIONS....by David J. Dawson

REVIEWS

TERRIBLE POWERS
a review of Allen Drury's
A Senate Journal, 1943-1945.....by Joan Kennedy Taylor

JOAN KENNEDY TAYLOR, editor 50¢

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Published monthly by Persuasion, Inc., 260 West 86th Street, New York, N. Y. 10024. Subscription rate: $5.00 per year ($6.00 outside U. S., Canada and Mexico). Canadian residents add 8% foreign exchange.

Please include ZIP code number with your address.

Publisher.....*David J. Dawson*
Editor.....*Joan Kennedy Taylor*
Staff.....*Elenore Boddy*
Avis Brick
Joyce Jones
Lois Roberts

Persuasion is a trade mark registered with the United States Patent Office.

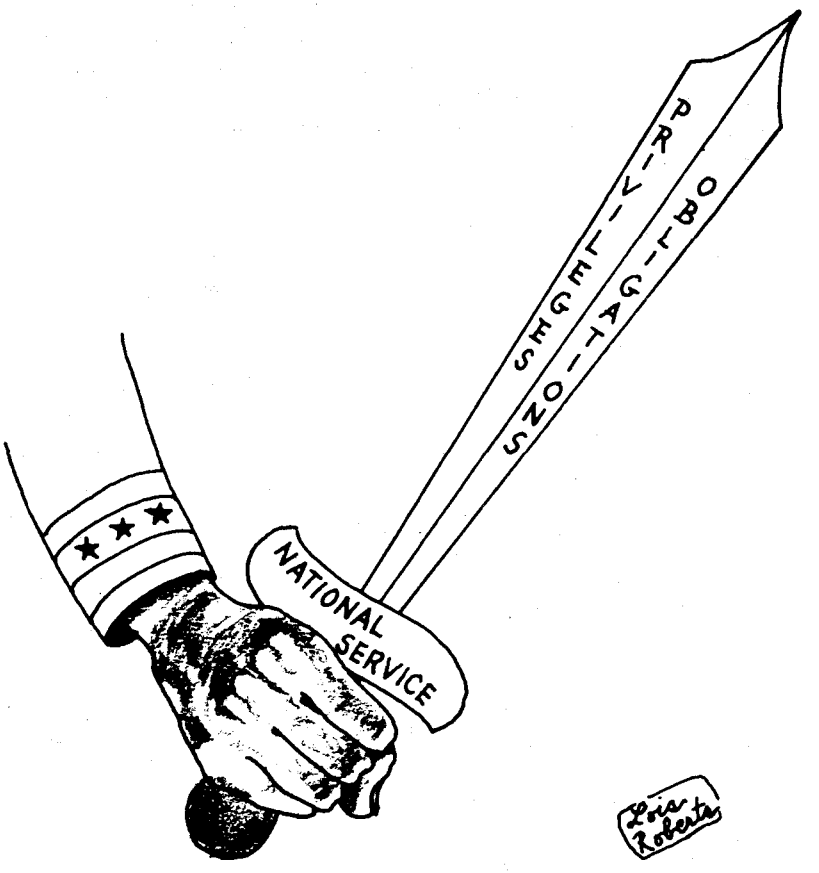
Copyright © 1967 by Persuasion, Inc.

All rights reserved—no reproduction in whole or in part without permission.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MARCH, 1967 VOL. IV, NO. 3

VIEWS



The Draft Part VI:

Privileges and Obligations

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The draft has created by the power of law a new class of privileged citizens. This new class is a wildly disparate one; its members are chronically anxious about their status, the rightness of their privileges, and the alternatives of life or death implicit in the government's capacity to withdraw a privilege and impose an obligation instead.

Today there are some 1,700,000 draft-age but draft-deferred college students peacefully pursuing the privilege of education, while each month tens of thousands of other draft-age men are forcibly taken into a life that can end in death, a life of ceaseless curtailment of liberty, a life without choice. . .and the only difference between these two groups, between the privileged and the obligated, is that one group entered college, while the other did not (or could not) and so its members were available to "fulfill their military obligation." Worse, the very fact of college deferments makes the drafting of the non-collegiate even more likely.

A passion for learning is one almost certain way into the new class (subject, of course, to change by the executive as are all such "privileges"). But learning is not the only passion for which special favor is granted. It is written into the draft law that ministers, and students of the ministry, are exempt, even though our most basic legal document thoroughly separates church and state. Conscientious objectors are draft-exempt. A man's depth of feeling against killing, if "religious," and his ideas about the morality of war excuse him from the onerous impositions that another man must bear if his feelings are less deep and his convictions do not reject war.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

You can count on almost automatic deferment if your choice of career is in the healing arts of medicine or dentistry. A love of farming is another way into the privileged group. The law provides that an attachment to things agricultural, of sufficient strength to cause you actually to engage in them, is enough cause for deferment. If you can fortuitously so direct your career passions that someone of sufficient authority says your skill in physics or computers or ballistics or chemistry or what not is such that your doing your job makes the nation somehow more secure, you can be granted the privilege of continuing your work. The lawmakers are in the privileged class. The law provides that elected officials and judges of the United States and of the states, territories and possessions are exempt from the draft.

Even the medically unfit are among the privileged. This has become a country where it is a blessing to have an unstable slipped disc, a "trick" knee, bad eyesight, or a psychological malfunction. Being a thief can have its privileges, too. There are cases of young men who have committed some petty theft or other relatively minor crime simply to get a record and be admitted to the ranks of the new privileged--a thief is considered "morally unfit for service."

Whether one enters the favored class or not is sometimes a matter of simple accident or prejudice. In one district, all those of age nineteen are called (it's a city heavily populated by the retired), while in another, the average age is twenty-two (a housing development built just after the war provides a backlog of youths). Accident can dog you in the induction center.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A system which processes 4,000 men through its medical facilities one month can hardly be as thorough when processing five or ten times that a month or so later. Hurried doctors, inept clerks and cynical indifference result in some being made exempt without cause, others being inducted with hidden chronic conditions which the day before or the day after would have exempted them. I myself know of two instances in which a draftee helplessly stood in line watching while a clerk erased pertinent medical data from his record in order to stamp his file acceptable for service, presumably just to meet the day's quota.

The prejudices of one draft board will defer a returning Peace Corpsman; the prejudices of another will make him immediately 1A. In one district a man may be deferred as sole support for his mother, even though she has a guaranteed income from a large trust fund; while in another, an older son is drafted, even though a younger brother must then quit college to support their mother.

Even official mismanagement of statistics can affect your membership, in or out of the privileged. Bruce K. Chapman, in his book *The Wrong Man in Uniform* (Trident Press, New York, 1967), points out that the military records pipeline can become so clogged that the Army doesn't know what it is doing. Not knowing how many men are available for the draft, not knowing how many men are enlisting, the Army has been known to call for more men than it needed, and hence caused thousands to be brought in who might never have been drafted if only the Army had known its own figures.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is a nightmare world where such accidents as a clerical error, a willful falsification, an overworked doctor, the location of one's home, a prejudice of a draft board, a badly run system of data-gathering can capriciously bring the power of government to bear on a man and consign him either to a life of government-granted privilege or government-enforced obligation.

None of us escapes this consignment, like it or not. If you are a woman, that is enough in itself--you are privileged. Are you overage?--your privileges are relatively secure. But this state of things can change; your status is determined basically not by your choices but by government edict. Tomorrow all college deferments could be ended. The day after that, young fathers might be declared 1A. A few months from now, they may decide the entire system is too complicated and replace it in part or wholly by lottery. One system is now being designed which with ghoulish and, I am sure, unintended humor is being called FAIR, a shorthand version of "fair and impartial random selection." (President Johnson's message to Congress, March 6, 1967.)

In his March 6th message to Congress on conscription, President Johnson declares that the draft in 1948 was originally designed so that "the obligation and benefits of military service would be equitably borne." He admits that today "the system might have drifted from the original concept of equity." The President asked that the commission headed by Burke Marshall (which he appointed some months back) have as one of its objectives a look at the draft in the light of "fairness to all citizens." At the end of the message he states that "the nation's requirement

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that men must serve. . .imposes this obligation: That in this land of equals, men are selected as equals to service."

Here he echoes Franklin D. Roosevelt who said about America's first peacetime draft in 1940: "America has adopted Selective Service in time of peace, and, in doing so, has broadened and enriched our basic concepts of citizenship. Beside the clear democratic ideals of equal rights, equal privileges, and equal opportunities, we have set forth the underlying other duties, obligations and responsibilities of equal service."

What a fine sound it all has to many people. If one does not pay close attention, it slips by and a vague sense is left behind that somehow the draft is "democratic" and "equal." And that means it must be good, though at times it does seem to be a little hard on some individuals. As long as the great majority of the people have this feeling about the draft, it will not be seriously challenged as an instrument of policy.

Although the United States is technically a republic of limited powers rather than a total democracy (in which the danger is that the vote will be unlimited by the rights of citizens), it is very generally called a democracy. And most people have a common-sense definition of democracy. A democracy is the kind of country where everybody is treated fairly, where the law applies to everyone equally and the people have a say in their government. To put it another way, a "democratic" country is one in which a man may choose to do whatever he wants as long as he does not set out to harm others. This definition is implied in such typically American remarks as,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Nobody can tell me what to do." Or, "What business is it of theirs what I do as long as I'm not hurting anyone?" Or, "You run your life and I'll run mine, and everybody'll be happy."

The draft contradicts all this. An examination of the meaning of an idea used by both Presidents Johnson and Roosevelt, that of "equals in service" or "equal service" shows this contradiction. To perform a service is to take an action which will help achieve an end desired by someone else. In the marketplace this is effected through trade. It is voluntary. The standard is set by the one buying the service. You want your suit cleaned, the cleaner agrees to clean it for a fee. If the result is not up to your standard, then you complain. As long as this transaction occurs voluntarily, it does not contradict the idea of "democracy." But let the government come in and require all persons in a given area to go to certain cleaners, while putting all other cleaners out of business--and, what's more, let the government arbitrarily pick who are to be the cleaners--and few would deny that the concept of democracy has been violated, that equality has been destroyed

In principle, what is the difference between this example and the draft as it actually exists, or, for that matter, any draft that can be conceived of? It is true that the use of military force is a unique service, in that it is properly a function of the government. But this is all the more reason why that military force should be restrained and not allowed to coerce citizens. When the government states that it will use its power to require anyone to perform services, it is force that lies behind the act, it is force that requires the parties to accept the terms, it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is force which defines and then applies the definition of what is "equal" service. Are you coercing the cleaner if you force him to be a cleaner rather than a farmer but not coercing him if you force him to be a soldier?

This article assumes, as do all the articles in this series on the draft, a free society as a prime political value. That is the kind of society in which every man may choose what he wants to do, provided he does not choose to use force in any of its forms on another man (except in self-defense). Should he wrongly use force, then and only then may the force of government move against him. In a free society all men should be equally subject to this. Allow any exceptions and to that degree the freedom of those in the society is reduced. This equality in a fully free society means that all men are absolutely and without exception protected in their capacity to make choices. In no society, including our own, is this, or has this been, fully the case.

It is this equality of protection which is gradually destroyed when the government starts to compel choices. One of the crucial ways that individuals experience the political system under which they live is in the choices they can and cannot make. In fact, this can be used as a measure of a society's degree of freedom.

In a monarchy the law is so written as to limit the choices possible to the majority of subjects, while granting more choices to a minority, the nobility, which acts as the king's supporters. In an absolute monarchy, all areas of choice are actually or potentially proscribable, and to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the degree that anyone exercises choice, he is really exercising a privilege which can be rescinded at the king's command.

This is the pattern of all tyrannies. In the U.S.S.R. one cannot choose to move from one city to another without a permit. Everyone of all sexes and ages is subject to national forced service, not only in the military, but on the farms, factories, mines, hospitals, schools--wherever the party masters and their puppetlike bureaucrats decide that the overriding State interests, as defined by them, require.

Between this extreme and that of the fully free society lies the welfare state, an unstable system of political inequalities, of limitations on choice, which tends more and more toward the full limitations characteristic of Feudal Europe, absolute monarchy, the U.S.S.R. and Nazi Germany. What marks the trend? The gradual converting of what would be freedoms in a free society into government-granted privileges. Often this trend is not identified because privilege-and-obligation combined, rather than obligation alone, tie the citizen to his government. In Great Britain one has to prove that an expected childbirth may not be normal in order to gain permission to have the child in a hospital rather than at home--but everyone gets free medical care.

The conversion of freedoms into privileges and the accompanying imposing of obligations is now proceeding in the United States--and one of the prime agencies of this conversion is the Selective Service System. Look at the areas which have been changed to some degree into government privileges for the draft-aged. This conversion

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can be used as a very subtle and devastating weapon to achieve the ends chosen by the individuals holding state power. Privilege has to be bought by cooperation; the recalcitrant loses his privileges and incurs an obligation instead. Thus do kings and dictators and all tyrants gather around themselves the supporters for their regimes and their goals. In the Soviet Union this special granting is almost embarrassingly blatant. The elite have special stores, schools, vacations, homes and other favors conferred upon them,and all they have to do in return is to obey and thereby help the regime impose ever greater restrictions of choice upon the great mass of subjects.

Today in America we have not reached such a state. But we have come fearsomely close to more restrictions than many of us are aware of in the recent past (see Joan Kennedy Taylor's review of *A Senate Journal* in this issue).

Today thousands of young men become doctors and dentists and ministers and physicists at least partially to avoid military obligation. By cooperating in their choice of occupation, they are granted the privilege of staying out. And even if they finally do go in, it is generally in their occupational capacity--hardly the same thing as going as an untrained nineteen-year-old private. In similar ways, one applies for and is granted the privilege of fatherhood, holy orders, even conscientious objectorship. And the foggy standard behind it all, imposed by executive decree and even foggier bureaucratic interpretation, is the notion of "national interest." The whole entangled, contradictory skein of privileges and obligations embedded in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the draft law has this undefined and undefinable ideal as its goal.

One of the prime political values of the founders of this country was the idea in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal." There is no claim here that men are granted equality by the State. The Roosevelt notion of "equal service" does not and cannot jibe with this idea of equality. The idea of being born with "duties, obligations and responsibilities" to the State is an idea which assumes that the State is a fact of nature, into which one is born. But the whole point of the Declaration of Independence was to assert the opposite: *men* are a certain way by nature, and they can change governments to protect themselves. This is what the Founders had in mind, and this is what that man in the street has in mind when he asks just to be left alone and he'll let others alone and everybody'll come out just fine.

As for the idea of national service as a road to equality, this is not only a proposal for ever-widening circles of coercion until eventually every man, woman and child is in service to the State--but even then all that would be reached is slavery, not equality. Forced service can never in fact equally apply to all. Ultimately, there must be masters who determine what the obligations must be and who see that these State-imposed debts are collected. This in turn implies someone to do the collecting, and the only way that can be done is through the system of bribing with privilege, under the threat of imposing an obligation. There is no such thing as equality in a slave society.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Quite clearly the draft is and always must be, whatever its form, a kind of institutionalized political inequality. It removes from freedom of choice certain classes of action and makes them into privileges and obligations with the tyrannical pressure of political force behind them. It is merely a systematized encroachment upon freedom and, to the degree that it encroaches, the society is a slave society, not a free one.

The only alternative to a system of enforced privileges and obligations is freedom. Notice that all this injustice and inequality and lack of democracy (in the popularly understood meaning of the word) vanishes simply by allowing people the widest possible range of choice. Then education, occupation, religion, conscience all become matters of choice, not privileges. Then whether or not to join the military is a choice, not an obligation.

Only with such freedom can a society be free.

--David J. Dawson

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

REVIEWS

Terrible Powers

A Senate Journal, 1943-1945, by Allen Drury, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1963

This is Allen Drury's first book, written over twenty years ago, when he was a young United Press reporter assigned to the Senate. It was his day-by-day record of events written as they occurred; kept partly, he tells us in the Foreword, to send to his family, and partly in hopes of eventual publication. It was published, virtually unchanged, he says, after the best-selling *Advise and Consent* and *A Shade of Difference* had brought him fame as a political novelist; and it brings us, a war and a police action later, the contemporary impact of many of the crucial deliberations of World War II.

Drury is a remarkable observer of the Senate. In the first place, he obviously loves all aspects of his subject. This book shows us what he considers to be our most vital institution in action--it shows us the parliamentary machinations, the committee work, the oratory, and above all the enormous good will that keep it going. Drury sees (and brings alive for us) a Senate that is divided, not into Republican and Democrat, not into Conservative and Liberal, but primarily into principled and unprincipled men--with the principled men of all persuasions in the overwhelming majority. This is a Senate in which the balance of power is controlled by a coalition of Republicans and anti-Roosevelt

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Democrats, but in which the only Progressive, Robert M. La Follette, Jr., can secure passage of a liberal proposal "simply by making a cogent speech in his effective manner."

A Senate Journal is really three things. It is a historical record of the relationship between the Senate and the Executive toward the end of World War II. It is an explanation and concretization of how the Senate operates. And it is a novelist's exercise book, full of character sketches, snatches of dialogue and moments of conflict.

There are a lot of dramatic stories half-revealed here, and Drury's incipient novelist's eye picked them out as they swept by him in the urgent and hectic days of wartime Washington. There is the story of Alben Barkley, member of Congress for 32 years and Majority Leader of the Senate for seven, who renounced his career on February 23, 1944. He had been a good politician; he had supported the positions of the Administration in the face of an ever-widening mistrust of Roosevelt on the part of his colleagues. And on February 22, 1944, Franklin Delano Roosevelt sent a supercilious and insulting veto of a tax bill to Congress. "The effect has been to create," Drury wrote in his journal, "for the first time, perhaps, of all the times in which he has differed from the Congress, a really grave crisis in the relations between the Executive and the Legislature." And the next day, Alben Barkley spoke in the Senate in reply, and denounced the veto message and the Executive who had sent it. "And finally, after specifically replying to every point in the veto message, he said that his happiness

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

did not depend upon the office he then held, but upon the approval of his own mind and his own conscience. Accordingly, he had called a meeting of the Democratic majority for 10 A.M. tomorrow, at which time he would submit his resignation as Majority Leader." When he had finished, a tiny handful of Roosevelt supporters remained in their seats. "Aside from those, all other members were on their feet to honor a man who had finally, after many years and many humiliations, reasserted his own dignity and his own self-respect and gained thereby an increased stature among the men with whom he works."

There is the story of Harry S. Truman, "farm boy, soldier, failure, child of Pendergast, Senator, Vice-President, one of the most honest people in creation," as he goes from being the chairman of the Truman Committee, one of the most efficient and admired committees in the Senate, to the Vice-Presidency, where he said to Drury, "'I was getting along fine until I stuck my neck out too far and got too famous--and then they made me V.P. and now I can't do anything. No sir,' said Harry Truman, smiling but more than a little serious, 'I can't do anything.'" The day after that interview, he could do more than any other man in America, for he had become President of the United States.

And there is the story of another farm boy, Henry Wallace, also admired by Drury, but for different reasons. He appears in these pages as shy and awkward and faintly ridiculous, a Vice-President who never quite manages to master the one thing that even Roosevelt's inactive Vice-Presidents had to know--the parliamentary rules of the Senate. But Drury judges men by their devotion

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to principle, and he found that the man who "looks like a hayseed, talks like a prophet, and acts like an embarrassed schoolboy" had principles. Passed over by Roosevelt as a Vice-Presidential candidate for the fourth term in favor of Harry Truman, offered the job of Secretary of Commerce in an exchange that rocked the Capitol as the disgruntled former Secretary, Jesse Jones, made Roosevelt's firing letter public, Wallace tried to fight a Congress of men who disliked him to be confirmed in the job the President had promised. Watching him being questioned in the Commerce Committee of the Senate, Drury wrote: "For five hours today Henry Wallace of Iowa faced men who don't like him and argued for his principles with the really rather magnificent candor and courage which are his two best qualities. . . .There was something almost obscene about the fact that a man as essentially good as he is had to be subjected to such an ordeal. Yet it has to be done, just as his nomination, when it finally comes before the Senate, will have to be rejected unless the George bill has passed. For Henry has aspired to monumental power and would, if given it, proceed in his headlong fashion to impose upon the country a blueprint for which it is not yet ready. It is one thing to have the dream and it is another to attempt to drive the country into it. Henry's world is one of plans and programs, imposed with an eager compulsion upon folks who may not always agree. The happy way of the reformer might too easily lead to destruction." The George bill, a bill to strip the Commerce Department of some of its vast, accumulated wartime powers, was passed; and Henry Wallace became Secretary of Commerce. We last glimpse him, by-passed by power, at Truman's first Presidential address to Congress, where, says Drury, he looked "really tragic,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unhappy and alone."

Drury ends his book with the ratification of the United Nations Charter. But there is another dramatic climax some 75 or 80 pages earlier which I found even more interesting. It was the climax of a story which ran through most of his journal, having to be pieced together in the beginning, as it started almost unnoticed.

It begins quietly, with the entry for January 11, 1944. The Clerk read the President's State of the Union message, which advocated national service. Ed Johnson, Democrat from Colorado, "remarked bluntly that national service looked like national conscription to him and he was against it." Warren Austin, Republican Senator from Vermont, took the opportunity to reintroduce his national service bill, which his colleagues backed away from "like startled horses." The bill was duly sent to the Military Affairs Committee, which heard testimony for over a month--the Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, and his Under Secretary, Robert Patterson, testifying for the bill; and William Green, President of the American Federation of Labor, testifying against. Drury described the bill as "fascistic." It proposed to, in his terms, "give the national government authority to pick a man up out of one job, set him down in another, uproot his home, break his union ties, force him apparently at the point of a gun, to labor, and in effect place the country squarely in the hands of a military oligarchy. 'There is no compulsion,' Austin cries. 'There is no military law, there is no regimentation. No one will be forced to obey. It will be a great voluntary cooperation. No one will be under military duress.' Judge

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Patterson, who spoke acridly about 'being able to get labor when we want it and get things done without all this red tape and having to ask people for their cooperation,' had the grace to blush slightly when Austin said that."

Austin's bill died in committee. Military Affairs did briefly consider a bill later that spring "that would draft into labor battalions all 4-Fs who do not take essential war jobs." General Hershey was for that one, talking "in his light voice about how 'I have so many men' in this classification and 'I have so many men' in that." So was the new Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal--and, of course, the War Department.

But nothing was done in 1944 to draft civilians.

On December 4, 1944, General Brehon B. Somervell, testifying before a Senate Committee, said that unless certain shortages were met within thirty days, the Army would have to ask for national service legislation. Thirty-three days later, on January 6, 1945, President Roosevelt issued his State of the Union message, calling for--guess what?--national service. As a result, the May bill, to "force workers into war plants," in Drury's words, was passed by the House and sent to the Senate on February 2nd.

The bill was advocated by the usual group of military and naval leaders, with a new argument--the bill was necessary for the morale of the boys at the front. The military's cries of necessity were received coolly in the Senate--two Senators had visited the Norfolk Navy Yard unexpectedly a week or so earlier and found that despite the Navy's pleas for the conscription of war workers,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thousands of employees were semi-idle.

On February 18, 1945, in the midst of the hearings on the May bill, Secretary of War Stimson made a public speech in its support, which is masterfully paraphrased by Drury. "Others have compulsory labor, he cried: does not this nation, which has produced and produced and produced to become the miracle of the centuries, feel a sense of shame that it has managed to do it without the whip?"

There was a great deal of sentiment against manpower legislation in the Senate. But there was growing pressure from the President for it. Although the May bill was dropped by the Military Affairs Committee, they came up with a substitute bill. At the last moment, the substitute bill was amended to the point where it was more restrictive than the May bill, and was passed by the Senate on March 8, 1945. (It may be interesting, for those who consider Southern Conservatives watchdogs of liberty, to note in passing that the 16 votes against the bill came from Happy Chandler of Kentucky and one or two others against *any* manpower legislation who joined "Harry Byrd and a handful of Southerners eager to get absolute compulsion.")

The House then got the bill and ripped it to pieces; conferees were appointed from the House and the Senate; Warren Austin presented them with a compromise bill that was stronger than both the May bill and the Senate bill; and on March 24th the conference agreed on another compromise bill and reported it out with a vote of 8-2.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Drury's entry for March 25th, after he had seen the provisions of the conference report, was somber. This bill, now to be voted on by both houses, was, he said, "the most fantastic, fascistic bill ever proposed in America." If passed, it would set up the Director of War Mobilization, James F. Byrnes (trusted by the Senate because he was formerly a Senator from North Carolina), with the power to--at his discretion--establish labor ceilings in any area or industry, freeze any worker or any group of workers in their jobs, regulate all hiring and forbid any worker to take a specific job. Workers disobeying his standards would be liable for a year's imprisonment or $10,000 fine, or both.

The House debated it for an hour and a half on March 27, 1945, and then it was ready to vote. Drury describes the occasion. "There were many sober men on both sides of the aisle today, yet it was in a somehow almost-picnic atmosphere that a majority of the House of Representatives voted to throw democracy away. Watching, one was struck with the strangeness of it, as though no mood, no atmosphere could match what was going on here. Perhaps, one had thought, it would come, if it ever came, to the crash of physical violence, with great pain and bloodshed, a horrible thing, recognized and fought against to the last desperation. One realized today that it could come thus quietly, on a beautiful day on Capitol Hill, in the House chamber familiar as an old shoe, in a kind of daze, without a real understanding at all of what was actually happening." Majority Leader McCormack introduced the bill. The Yeas went into the lead and then fell behind, as forty-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eight Democrats crossed party lines to vote against the bill. "There came the Great Liberals, Marcantonio and Celler of New York, Helen Gahagan Douglas and Jerry Voorhis of California, voting for the bill. There came the lesser fry, many from the South. Presently it was over. 167 to 160 the House had adopted the conference report."

The Senate took longer to debate. O'Mahoney, Democrat from Wyoming, told the Senate on March 26th that the bill "is the repudiation of democracy. It is the sacrifice of freedom. It is the adoption of the principle by which Hitler regimented the people of Germany and by which Joseph Stalin and his predecessor, Lenin, regimented the people of Russia." On March 28th, Burton K. Wheeler, former member of the America First Committee, former Vice-Presidential candidate with Robert M. La Follette, Sr., on the Progressive ticket (1924), Democratic Senator from Montana, spoke against the bill, and asked what check there would be on the terrible powers of the Director. And on that same day, the President made his wishes known. "Up from the White House. . .came a letter from a man who has apparently decided, now that the conferees have produced something beyond anyone's wildest dreams, to really get in and fight for it." On March 29th, "Warren Austin, the only man in the Senate who is really deeply, passionately, devotedly in favor of the bill, replied indignantly to McKellar's charge that it is 'involuntary servitude' by arguing that the same 'involuntary servitude' applies to drafting a man into the armed forces. McKellar responded that working for the government and working for private employers making private profit are two

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

different things."

On the evening of March 31st, James F. Byrnes issued a report as Director of War Mobilization and Reconversion. In it he stated, "the need for manpower legislation continues. . .not only for war production but also for the production of essential civilian goods; and later to facilitate reconversion." Senate reaction was hostile--no one had expected the powers in the bill to be used for reconversion. On April 2nd, a young Republican Senator from Oregon, Wayne Morse, made his maiden speech, and it was against the manpower bill. "With a disconcerting bluntness he went straight to the heart of it. The Administration, he charged, demands the bill because it is afraid of unemployment, has no cure for it, and hopes to stave it off by forcing people to move about from job to job at the whim of the government." That same day, James F. Byrnes unexpectedly resigned.

And then came April 3, 1945. "Forty-six Senators decided today that the country should not go under dictatorship," wrote Drury. "The House of Representatives was against them, 29 of their colleagues were against them, all the agencies of the executive branch of the government were against them, the President was against them, the Army and Navy were against them, a sizable, unthinking portion of the press was against them. They stood firm. They knew where the ultimate necessity lay, and they voted accordingly. Their responsibility was for the preservation of the freedom of America, whatever the passing storm, and they maintained it. But there were only 46. Out of all the people of power in America, there were only 46. It was not a large margin to save

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the work of 160 years. Yet it sufficed."

The coda of this story is that, two days after the manpower bill failed to pass the Senate, the Navy announced that it was cutting draft quotas for the coming month by one-half. Exactly a week later, the War Department canceled 12 tank plants, reduced production of artillery by 10 per cent, and officially issued the following communique: "American production is now at a level which assures fighting men of a sufficient production rate to complete the war against Germany and provide the output necessary to supply forces to be used against Japan." Drury has a comment on this, too. "Three or four weeks ago, lying in their teeth about the sad state of production, and knowing it, the top men of the War Department misused the truth ruthlessly in their desperate attempt to get a dictatorial manpower bill through Congress."

And on April 12th, it became apparent that the unsuccessful attempt to get the manpower bill passed had been the swan song of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He died at Warm Springs, and Harry S. Truman became the President of the United States.

There are a lot of questions that can be asked when one realizes that this dramatic story is actually a behind-the-scenes segment of our history. This is a book that should be read and thought about by everyone interested in politics, for Mr. Drury's account shows up in vivid fashion both the strengths and the weaknesses of our system. How did this incredible bill come so close to being passed? There was pressure from the Administration, and the President, being also

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the leader of the majority party, could virtually command some of the members of Congress to vote the way he wanted them to. Others, like Alben Barkley, felt bound by the conventions to give at least token support to the passing of a measure they did not endorse. Before the Senate voted, a group of reporters asked one of the men who had been responsible for the conference report to comment on Byrnes' speech calling for peacetime controls. He said that none of the members of the conference on the bill had intended the powers to outlive the war. "'That's terrific power,' our informant said thoughtfully. 'My, that's terrific.' 'Well, Senator,' we said, 'that's what's puzzled all of us reporters about this. If you felt that way about it, how did you ever produce such a thing?' 'Well, they told us they had to have it,' he said."

The precedent was, of course, the wartime emergency powers. So much power had already been given to the administrative agencies of Franklin D. Roosevelt that, to many, one more power didn't seem that definitive. Above all, perhaps, there was the mounting pressure from the leaders of the armed services.

Drury views the drive for the manpower bill as a drive for power by a military oligarchy, which expected to control the Director of War Mobilization. He presents many details that would support such a view. Using the fact of the draft as the opening wedge, the military tried to gain in turn national service, labor battalions and, finally, control of the nation's entire production. Why did this drive fail? The somewhat disconcerting answer of this book seems to be that it failed largely by accident. *If* Roosevelt had not been

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dying and had exerted even more pressure, *if* Stimson had not made his unfortunate speech, *if* Byrnes had not issued his manpower report just before the Senate voted, *if* the war in Europe had not been almost won by the time the manpower forces could really get going, *if* Byrnes had not resigned--there might have been a labor czar in America.

The weakness in the Senate that one sees here, the weakness that made the manpower bill a possibility, is the weakness of unlimited compromise, of no one really knowing what one should and shouldn't vote on. Drury himself is similarly disarmed. His avowed admiration of the principles of Henry A. Wallace and "the great liberals" is constantly being confronted with his knowledge that loss of freedom would be entailed by putting these principles into practice. He is a partisan of international cooperation with, at the same time, a remarkably clear grasp of the threat of Soviet Russia, even in the middle of World War II. Consequently, he sometimes appears to be in a no man's land of principles. The heroes of this story are men he disagrees with on most political principles--men like Robert A. Taft, whom he sees as "one of the strongest and ablest men here, one of the men who act consistently as though they think what is being done here really matters to the welfare of the country," and isolationist Burton K. Wheeler, whom he describes thus in the United Nations Charter debate: "Out of the day's debate there emerged the figure of Montana's angry man, looking out upon a world black, black, black, unable by reason of his own rigid and unsparing honesty to see it any other way, pacing back and forth along the desks, wheeling like some cornered

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tiger at the pin-prick barbs of Claude Pepper attacking his motives and the rest. . . .It is as though Wheeler went beyond and through their pretenses and had his eyes on a darker reality far deeper than they perceive. This is not the case, for they perceive it too. It is just that they will not admit it, needing so desperately to hope, while he, who has virtually abandoned hope, admits it with the frightening coldness of despair."

Drury is loathe to call any man, with any principle, totally wrong. He shows us John H. Bankhead of Alabama, "who personally wouldn't hurt a fly," threatening the Senate that the Ku Klux Klan would ride again if white supremacy were threatened in his state by the removal of the poll tax. It is only Theodore Bilbo of Mississippi that he identifies as "evil and ruthless"; he sees Warren Austin, who was willing to fight for two years to enslave all American labor, as "good hearted." The Senate seems to share this sometimes indiscriminate benevolence with him, and it almost proved their undoing. "We are in the grip of forces beyond our comprehension, yet we seem powerless to resist the stream which carries us on," cried Senator O'Mahoney in his fight against the manpower bill.

Yet they were not powerless. They did resist. For the other side of the coin is that indiscriminate benevolence allows the strength which *did* defeat the manpower bill--the strength of rational discussion. But rational discussion to be effective must be partisan. It is not the fence-sitters that save us, it is the outcries raised by the Tafts and the O'Mahoneys and the Wheelers--and by the Wayne Morses and the Trumans--

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when they think something is not right. The Senators represent vastly different points of view, and they are in office for six years without having to account to anyone for their opinions. And each of them has some things which he holds as not being open to compromise. It is that largely unworded area of principles which won't be compromised that somehow, so far, has kept the major tyrannies from being instituted in America.

"You put them there," says Drury, "and as long as they are there you're going to remain free, because they don't like to be pushed around any more than you do.

"This is comforting to know."

And the more we can make explicit just what being "pushed around" consists of, the more comforting it will be.

--Joan Kennedy Taylor

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PERSUASION, INC.
260 WEST 86th ST.
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10024
RETURN REQUESTED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED